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ABSTRACT

The role of institutions for the handicapped in inservice and preservice preparation of professionals is considered. Among the training advantages offered at an institution are a varied population of handicapped persons (including multiple handicaps), a wide age range, the existence of an interdisciplinary staff, and opportunities for both didactic and applied learning. Institutional programs and personnel can also help in making the transition to community living. Training aspects of the Elwyn Institutes are described, including a 2 year teacher aide program, a project to train the staffs of special needs day care centers, practicum sites for undergraduate and graduate students, and inservice courses for area educators. (CL)

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PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION AND THE RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTION: A NATURAL PARTNERSHIP

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Introduction

As the residential facility for the handicapped prepares for an uncertain future, its training function may be one of the few areas of certainty upon which to build. The institution's long history and wide range of service place it in an excellent position to provide perspectives that other agencies simply cannot. The experience at Elwyn Institute may serve as a model to other residential facilities seeking to maintain a valued role in the continuum of human services. The conversion of this historic institution, first from a custodial facility to a comprehensive education and rehabilitation center, and secondly to a multi-faceted professional training agent, shows that the negative status acquired by many institutions need not be a necessary phenomenon. Benefits accrue to both the institution and the college or university through cooperative personnel preparation programs.

Although the cyclical nature of service delivery philosophies may place the residential facility in a different light in the future, such agencies must constantly re-evaluate their roles in

the present. Timely responsiveness to societal needs is the only way to guarantee that the vital role played by residential institutions in the past can accommodate the pressing needs of the future.

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BACKGROUND

Historically, the residential institution for the handicapped has played a minimal role in pre-service and in-service preparation of professionals or para-professionals in the habilitation disciplines. Often, medical interns in various specialties would visit the local institution to observe "patients" exhibiting rare genetic syndromes. On occasion, classes from nearby teacher's colleges toured, supposedly to "let them see what they were getting into" - intended to "weed out" those who hadn't developed true commitments to their chosen profession. Other aspects of most institutional programs provided few "model training sites" which could serve as examples of acceptable service delivery approaches. When college students did come, it was generally considered an honor and a privilege for institutional staff to take time out from regular duties to escort them or share expertise. The thought that the college ought to provide any remuneration to the institution was virtually unheard of. The idea of partnership in professional preparation (Council for Exceptional Children, 1976) rarely existed between the institution for the handicapped and the institution of higher education. The strong commitment to "continuous field experiences" found in descriptions of teacher preparation

programs rarely had a counterpart in budgetary planning for such programs when it came to relationships with the residential institution.

Today, as the institution's role must change to accommodate serious challenges to its very existence, the training function of the residential facility should be re-examined. Residential facilities for the handicapped offer many things which university-based preparation programs cannot, and which the more traditional field sites, such as public school classrooms, do not appear yet ready to provide. There is a varied population of handicapped people present - so important in a time when many states are moving to broad-based, non-categorical or generic certification programs. There is a wide age range among the institution's population - something which must be experienced if prospective professionals are to see sequence and continuity in habilitative programming. This is particularly important as services expand upward and downward from the elementary school-age group who received the greatest attention in the past. The exposure to different age groups also orients students in training to other careers within this broad field, and can prevent viewing career possibilities in narrow ranges. Job possibilities in programs such as "infant stimulation," special needs day care, day activities, private residential facilities, sheltered workshops, adult education,

and community living arrangements are often completely unknown to future teachers. There appears, however, to be greater need for people trained to work in these than in many of the more traditional areas. Often, it is not recognized that many of the competencies required to work in such non-school programs are very similar to competencies developed in pre-service special education teachers. Where post-employment re-training is necessary, it can be considerably less than that required for employees with no previous training in this area. As Corrigan (1978) notes

> Trainees will view themselves as 'human service educators,' not solely as classroom teachers. Understanding that a teaching/learning component is at the heart of all human service work, they will be able to function flexibly and effectively in a variety of educational settings.

Frequently it is the person with little formal training or experience who accepts such a position, and whose turnover rate is extremely high (Dellinger & Shope, 1978) and costly (Zaharia & Baumeister, 1978). Broader pre-service preparation may lessen both turnover rate, and time and cost of orientation and in-service training.

Another aspect of the institution which meets professional preparation needs is the presence of persons exhibiting multiple handicapping conditions. Experiences working with such people can break down past emphasis on sharp, artificial delineations between

categories of disabilities. There is also an interdisciplinary staff present in the residential facility which provides needed background in planning and delivering habilitation through the "team approach" mandated by current legislation. Opportunities exist for both didactic and applied learning, rather than being limited to traditional college classroom-bound, vicarious experiences. In the institutional setting, students-in-training have the opportunity to work side-by-side with professional role models who are experienced and involved in the daily practice of their professions, rather than learning only from those whose years of college teaching have often of necessity removed them from the chance to keep up to date on many current aspects of their field. If it is true, as often noted, that teaching is only a simulation of real life, then teaching about teaching in settings far removed from the real world of handicapped learners presents even less opportunity for prospective teachers, counselors, therapists and others to acquire even entry level competencies in their professions. Generally, it is left to the inexperienced and uninitiated college student to master theories and service models during the college years, then to make the leap to effective practice on one's own in the first years of paid professional experience. Since we know that on-the-job learning is important

in every endeavor, it is important to plan such experiences as early as possible, and to combine the theoretical and practical aspects of this learning in the process. Such an arrangement also allows students to experience virtually all teacher tasks (Walker, 1978).

Institutional programs and personnel can also serve as a resource for the transition to community living. As alternative living arrangements become available for institution residents, staff experienced with such clients may be best prepared to help train group home supervisors and similar personnel in their new roles. Areas such as these are areas in which college and university training programs are generally unavailable. This lag between community service needs and college training programs is also seen as new legislation and litigation bring previously unserved severely/profoundly handicapped learners to the public school's attention. It is further seen in other types of service needs, such as home-based infant intervention and early childhood programs.

Innovations such as University Affiliated Facilities and Research and Training Centers close part of the gap, but they reach only a relatively small number of prospective professionals. If the residential institution is to continue to play a vital role in the continuum of services to the handicapped, its training role must

expand to make it an even more valued resource to the community. The training design of the future must recognize "that teacher education, schools and other community educational agencies, and colleges and universities are interrelated and interacting components of one system" (Corrigan, 1978). A look at what one historic residential facility has done in partnership with several colleges and universities may help clarify this new role.

The Programs

Elwyn Institutes, founded in 1852, has a long tradition of voluntary services to the handicapped. Originally a residential institution, Elwyn now provides community-based day and residential services in more than a dozen locations in three states. Its comprehensive programs serve over 2000 children and adults from infancy through geriatric age diagnosed as mentally retarded, neurologically, visually, hearing or physically impaired, socially/emotionally disturbed, or multihandicapped. Pre-professional and in-service training programs in cooperation with several colleges, universities and public schools parallel the various direct service programs at each level. The original design for these professional preparation programs was developed in close cooperation with the Pennsylvania State University. After field testing, these programs have been modified to meet the needs of

many other colleges and universities. In the past ten years, more than 40 colleges and universities throughout the country have sent undergraduate and graduate students (and often faculty) to observe and learn in Elwyn's programs.

Infant and early childhood programs at Elwyn provide the sites for both para-professional and professional interns. Students in the two-year teacher aide program from the local community college complete field work here. Two major universities place child care worker trainees and undergraduate special education student-teachers in these programs. University-approved Elwyn faculty serve as field supervisors, providing observation, follow-up conferences, seminars and supportive services. Elwyn receives remuneration through contractual agreement with the universities involved. Elwyn staff with training and experience in both special education and teacher development work full-time with these programs. The appointment of full and part-time staff to such positions further demonstrates the institution's commitment to its role in professional development. Elwyn's expertise and experience in providing model early intervention programs also allowed it to be selected for a grant to provide training to the staffs of 15 Title XX funded special needs day care centers in Philadelphia. More than 200 in-service teachers, child care workers, aides, social

workers, health services personnel, and speech, occupational and physical therapists are receiving on-site training through this program. Graduate and undergraduate college credit and Elwyn In-Service Certificates are provided for successful completion of aspects of this program. In addition to Elwyn staff, who provide the bulk of the training, other services such as workshops featuring nationally known experts, access to Elwyn's Professional Library, materials development and exchange, and consultant services are utilized.

Beyond the pre-school years, Elwyn's elementary and junior high special education programs, comprised of day and resident public school students, provide early orientation and student-teaching sites for students from several colleges and universities. Again, University-approved Elwyn staff serve as field supervisors. Students in these programs participate in two introductory courses at Elwyn early in their training. In this aspect of the cooperative program, freshmen and sophomores contemplating majors in regular or special education come to Elwyn for a three-credit "Orientation to Exceptional Children" course, where Elwyn specialists make presentations on various disabilities and related services. Each didactic activity is complemented by a related observation, where activities are designed to assist in developing such competencies as

observation skills and data recording. A second course, "Field Experience with Exceptional Children," provides these young undergraduates with a chance to work in a more sustained, term-long classroom experience. Students function as aides with Elwyn teachers for one to one and one-half days per week. As part of this experience, students learn to chart behavior, complete case studies, utilize systematic observation and recording skills, write behavioral objectives, plan and evaluate lessons, present individual and small group non-academic activities, and share, evaluate and reflect on their varied experiences. These students plus others return to Elwyn after completing core degree and program requirements for another unique experience. This second experience, which varies in time spent and scheduling from one college to another, involves both a pre-professional term and a student-teaching term. During the pre-professional term, upper level undergraduate students spend five mornings a week for a full term in on-going Elwyn special education classrooms. This experience is part of a "clinical teaching" course in which the students work with small groups of handicapped learners in applying a diagnostic-prescriptive teaching model. Supervision and feedback are provided by both a cooperating teacher and a University-approved Elwyn supervisor. In the afternoons, methods courses such

as "Teaching the Severely Handicapped," "Teaching the Mildly Handicapped," "Audio-Visual Media" and "Teaching Reading" are taught, again by University-approved Elwyn faculty. Instruction and requirements for these courses coincide as closely as possible with the morning field experience. Students successfully completing this program remain for a second term of full-time student-teaching. The field experiences in these two consecutive terms are made to vary in order to provide as broad a base of preparation as possible. Placements differ in age, level, and type of disability to help satisfy requirements for Pennsylvania's K-12 non-categorical special education teaching certificate.

Student-teaching completes the pre-service experience. During this term, students are observed and participate in follow-up conferences regularly. In addition, weekly seminars on topics related to current or future professional needs are presented by Elwyn specialists. Students can earn up to 30 college credits in these programs at Elwyn. More than 100 students per year now participate in these programs, and over 350 have completed some or all phases of this program in the past five years. Liaison is maintained with sending colleges and universities through regular meetings with the faculties, and Elwyn staff serve on teacher preparation advisory boards and participate in competency-based teacher education activities at the colleges. Since many Elwyn programs

operate year round, universities also send in-service graduate students who are teaching during the regular school year to complete graduate internships in speech pathology, special education, rehabilitation counseling and related fields during the summer months. Universities and schools of nursing send student-nurses for experiences in pediatric, public health, psychiatric, and public school nursing. Graduate and undergraduate interns in social work also complete field experiences in Elwyn programs.

The colleges and universities involved in these cooperative programs benefit from the regularity of long-term mutual commitments, allowing for planning several terms or years in advance. Placing groups of up to 20 students per supervisor in one location eliminates traveling from one school to the next, which is costly in both time and travel expenses. Bad weather, car trouble, and schedule changes become less significant factors. Being freed from these non-productive activities, the field supervisor can double the length or number of formal observations. Follow-up conferences are completed without feeling rushed to get to the next school. Student-teachers know that the supervisor is literally just down the hall throughout the term. Student time and car pools needed for travel to weekly seminars are eliminated. An additional

benefit of immeasurable value is that the University-approved supervisors and clinical instructors come from the special education program itself. They know the institution, the staff, the curriculum, the programs and the students. They do not need to spend valuable time early in a term familiarizing themselves with the student-teaching site before they can be of maximum value to cooperating teachers and interns. Furthermore, the continuity of full-time staff in these positions obviates the need for re-training supervisory personnel caused by staff turnover or frequent changes in student-teaching sites. Many other mutual benefits accrue from such a long-term partnership, including in-service training by universities for cooperating teachers and other staff.

Supporting the classroom-based special education at Elwyn are a wide range of ancillary services. These specialty areas also serve as sites for graduate and undergraduate internships and field experiences. Included are speech and language pathology, audiology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, reading, adaptive physical education, hearing and vision services, school psychology, counseling psychology, art, music, home economics, therapeutic recreation, and dental and medical specialties.

Professional education at Elwyn is not limited to traditional student-teaching or experiences at the preschool, elementary and

junior high level. As Elwyn's students enter mid-adolescence, the focus of their programming shifts to greater emphasis on pre-vocational skills and community readiness. College students interested in such programs complete practicums in Elwyn's Work/Study or Career Training programs. A three credit course, developed and presented at Elwyn by Elwyn staff, is available to complement supervised field placements. This course, "Pre-Vocational and Vocational Preparation of Handicapped Adolescents" is a joint offering for two area colleges. Where no such experience existed in these colleges' teacher preparation programs just a few years ago, this course is now required for issuance of the initial teaching credential. Similar courses and practica are being explored with other colleges and universities, as teacher programs move away from attention often focused exclusively on the elementary school age child.

As Elwyn students progress to vocational evaluation, job training, community preparation, and adult education, parallel professional training programs are also available. Graduate and undergraduate interns in vocational rehabilitation and rehabilitation counseling complete term-long internships. Not only is Elwyn's main campus utilized, but the vocational evaluation and training and the transitional and group living aspects of community-based

satellite centers are also made available so interns can experience the sequential nature of the habilitation process. Interns are placed in vocational assessment, counseling, work adjustment, adult day activities, adult education, work exploration, job training, job placement, sheltered employment, transitional, group living, and follow-up programs. Industrial engineering students at a major university assist in the design of jigs, fixtures and work stations for Elwyn's sheltered employment settings as part of course requirements. Interns from the state's only degree program in "Community Services for the Handicapped" complete supervised field experiences at Elwyn's satellite centers. Interns in speech pathology and audiology also complete clinical requirements in these programs. Manual language courses are offered at Elwyn's Philadelphia center by the county community college. Elwyn's professional library and historical archives, including the A.A.M.D. archives, are available to students in the various college-related programs.

Other community services provided at Elwyn include Pennsylvania Department of Education "Approved In-Service Courses." These courses cover highly specialized topics such as "Advanced Manual Sign Language" and provide credit toward permanent and/or Masters Equivalency certification for area public school and Elwyn staff.

More than 20 post-baccalaureate courses and credit workshops are presented by a major university in late afternoons, evenings and weekends year round at Elwyn's main campus. Through this program, staff and others from the community complete initial or permanent certification requirements, or take courses as part of their continuing education.

Research in professional preparation is the next stage planned for further development. To date, two doctoral dissertations and one master's thesis focusing on professional and paraprofessional development have been completed, and related projects are planned for the coming year. Extensive use of Elwyn's audio-visual services, with videotaping and closed-circuit T.V. capacities, will play a major part in these developments. Programs for regular educators, both pre-service and in-service, are also viewed as areas for extension in the near future.

As teacher preparation begins to emphasize early, continuous field experience, and as attention turns to areas such as early intervention, vocational preparation, service to severely involved, and geriatric-handicapped citizens, professionals involved in pre-service and in-service training in human service disciplines might do well to look to the comprehensive residential facility. There is a wealth of untapped resources there which can no longer go unused.

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